

Investigation of Studies on Curriculum Fidelity in Turkey

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the studies on curriculum commitment in Turkey. The descriptive content analysis method was used in the research. Google Scholar and YÖK national databases were searched using the keywords "curriculum" and "fidelity." Twenty-four studies using these words in their titles were included in the research. Studies were classified according to the variables of year, language, study type, sample group, method, subject, and analysis techniques used. The results revealed that the number of studies on curriculum commitment had increased significantly in recent years. Most of the studies are in the Turkish language. More studies examine the commitment of secondary and high school teachers to the curriculum. Many of the studies are in the article type, and the number of doctoral studies is limited. The issue of commitment to the curriculum was more associated with personal and professional factors. Curriculum literacy, self-efficacy, curriculum design approach, professional commitment, program orientation, teacher autonomy, philosophy of education, teaching motivation, and learning-teaching process are other issues associated with curriculum commitment. Quantitative methods were used in most studies, and descriptive and univariate analyses were used more. The results revealed a need to increase the number of qualitative studies and diversify the methods used to understand the commitment to the curriculum better.

Keywords: Curriculum fidelity, Descriptive analysis, Curriculum

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Introduction

Curricula are essential in today's education systems, and teachers play a crucial role in implementing these programs. Evaluation of teachers' commitment to programs is essential for the education system's effectiveness. Studies show how much teachers adhere to the programs directly affects student achievement (Fidan, 1986). In addition, the extent to which teachers have implemented the programs can provide a guide for program revision and improvement. In this context, this study examines teachers' commitment to programs and the factors affecting this commitment. The results of this study can make essential contributions to the fields of teacher education and curriculum development. This is crucial because the extent to which teachers provide opportunities for students to be involved in active learning approaches such as peer learning, peer review, and peer assessment are related to the development of students' higher-order competences (see Latifi et al., 2021, 2023; Noroozi et al., 2012, 2018, 2020; Valero-Haro et al., 2019, 2022).

Programs are critical in educating people in a qualified way, developing them socially, providing efficient education, and improving educational activities. It has been suggested that to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of education, and considerable emphasis should be placed on the phases of planning and programming (Ertürk, 1984). The concept of curriculum, which defines why, what, how, where, when and with whom a job will be done as a pre-designed schedule, is vital for teaching activities in education (Akdoğan & Uşun, 2017).

The curriculum is one of the essential elements in education, and teachers' adherence to this program affects the quality and efficiency of education (Bümen, Çakar, & Yıldız, 2014). How well teachers understand and apply for the program directly affects students' success in their education. Therefore, studying how committed teachers are to their programs can provide essential clues as to how the education system can be improved to increase student achievement.

In addition, training programs may change over time and need to be updated. Therefore, measuring how committed teachers are to their programs can provide a guide for program review. Teachers' commitment to programs is also crucial for teachers' professional development. A thorough understanding and implementation of programs can improve teachers' professional skills and help them explore better teaching methods. Finally, teachers' commitment to the programs is crucial for evaluating the education system. By determining how committed teachers are, this research can identify deficiencies and areas for improvement in the education system.

How successfully the prepared curriculum is applied in the education process is an essential factor affecting the suitability of the curriculum for its purpose. Mr. et al. (2017), program commitment is defined as the similarity between the intended and implemented form of the program. The program's effectiveness relates to teachers' mastery of program objectives, philosophy, prescribed teaching methods and techniques, and teaching experiences (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). However, many studies have observed that program implementers act differently from the targeted program (Brown & Campione, 1996; Turan-Özpolat & Bay, 2017). Bümen, Çakar, and Yıldız (2014) conducted a study that revealed that Turkish teachers selectively adopted the new curriculum innovations introduced in 2005 based on their individual experiences. To effectively evaluate the curricula, it is crucial to implement them in accordance with their intended programs.

O'Donnell (2008) stated that commitment to the program has five dimensions: adherence, dose/duration, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness, and program differentiation (see Figure 1). Adherence is a collection of program items, events, materials, tools, etc., used effectively. Dose/duration relates to the frequency, number, or duration of program executions. Quality of delivery refers to how the practitioners apply the methods and techniques. The responsiveness of program participants to innovation reflects their perspectives on the events and their inclusion in the program. On the other hand, program differentiation refers to the unique critical features that distinguish the new curriculum from the peer or old programs.

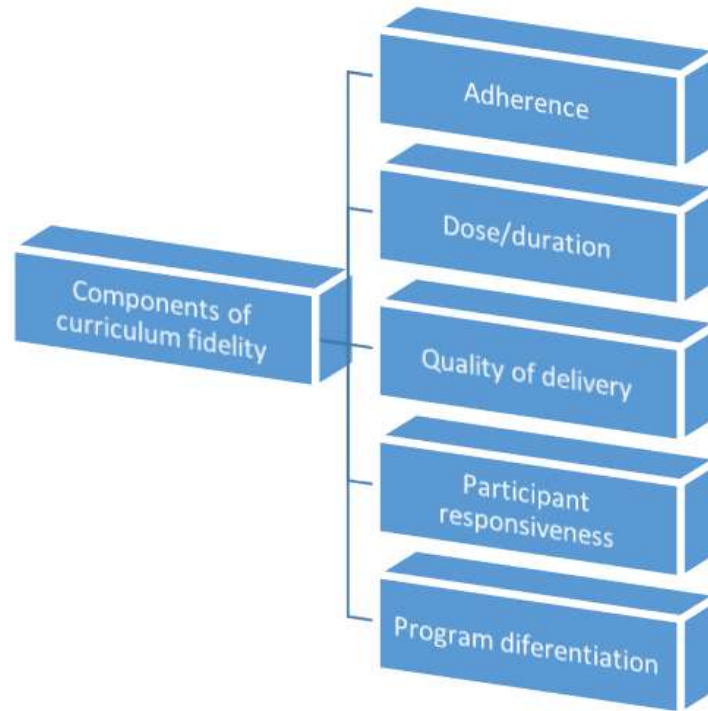


Figure 1. Components of Curriculum Fidelity

Dusenbury et al. (2003) state that if the curriculum is not implemented as planned, it will be challenging to make methodological and theoretical inferences about the essence of the curriculum. Thus, the problems and failures experienced during the implementation phase will be directly attributed to the program. For this reason, studies of curriculum fidelity are essential for information about the program's implementation rate, the application approach, and the change process against the new program. Program commitment is a concept that helps to make healthy decisions about the data and learning products in the implementation process (Carroll et al., 2007). Therefore, commitment to the curriculum can be considered an essential factor affecting the connection and relationship between the variables.

Purpose of the Research

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of studies conducted in Turkey on curriculum fidelity. Researchers examined teachers' commitment to the program from multiple perspectives with quantitative and qualitative approaches. Studies have shown that personal (Aşçı & Yıldırım, 2019; Aslan & Erden, 2020; Burul, 2018) and professional (Arslan Çelik & Gelmez Burakgazi 2021; Gürbüz, 2020; Karakuyu & Oğuz 2021; Yıldız, 2018) characteristics that affect teachers' commitment to the curriculum.

In addition, the relationship between different variables such as curriculum orientation, teaching motivation, curriculum literacy, teacher agency, professional commitment, educational philosophy, self-efficacy, and

curriculum design approach with the curriculum was discussed in studies (Aşçı & Yıldırım, 2019; Aytaç, 2021; Bayraktar, 2019; Boncuk, 2021; Kabaş and Yıldız, 2020; Yılmaz and Kahramanoğlu, 2021). In order to carry out more qualified studies, there is a need to examine the general tendencies of studies examining teachers' commitment to the curriculum.

The results can help understand the factors that affect teachers' commitment to the curriculum. The findings of this study can provide an understanding of what factors affect teachers' program commitment, which may facilitate future researchers' work on this topic. In addition, the obtained results can guide further research on how factors such as teacher characteristics, program characteristics, and teacher-student interaction affect teachers' program commitment. For the study, answers to the following research questions were sought:

- 1- How is the distribution of studies on curriculum fidelity according to years?
- 2- How is the distribution of studies on curriculum fidelity according to the publication language?
- 3- What is the distribution of studies on curriculum fidelity according to the study group?
- 4- How is the distribution of studies on curriculum fidelity according to the type of study?
- 5- How is the distribution of the studies on curriculum fidelity according to the related subjects?
- 6- What is the distribution of studies on curriculum fidelity according to the research method used?
- 7- What is the distribution of studies on curriculum fidelity according to the analysis techniques used?

Method

The descriptive content analysis method was used in the research. This method is expressed as a descriptive evaluation of studies' trends and research results on a particular subject (Çalık & Sözbilir, 2014). By using the descriptive content analysis method, the studies on teachers' commitment to the curriculum were examined and arranged, and the general trend of the studies was determined. Studies were classified according to the variables of year, language, study type, study group, number of samples, method, subject, and analysis techniques used. Google Scholar and YÖK national databases were searched using the keywords "curriculum" and "fidelity." Twenty-four studies using these words in their titles were included in the research. The reviewed studies are marked with * in the references.

Results

This section gives descriptive information about the studies on teachers' commitment to the curriculum in Turkey. Studies on the subject were examined according to the variables of year, publication language, study group, study type, subject to which curriculum fidelity is associated, research method, and analysis techniques.

When Figure 1 is examined, it is understood that research on curriculum commitment started in Turkey in 2014. The number of studies conducted has increased significantly in recent years. Most research was completed in 2021.

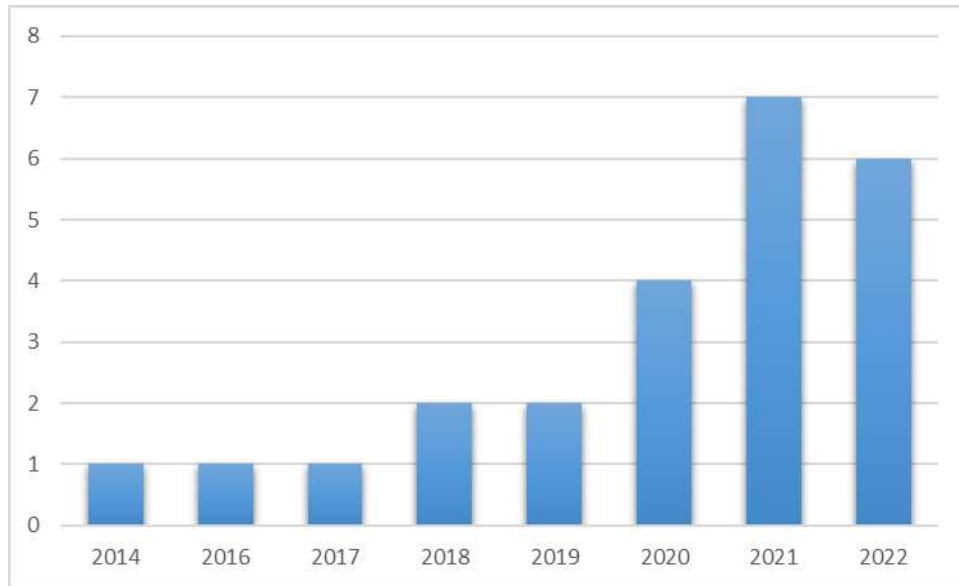


Figure 1. Distribution of Studies by Years

When Figure 2 is examined, it is understood that most studies (88%) on curriculum fidelity were published in Turkish. There are three studies published in English.

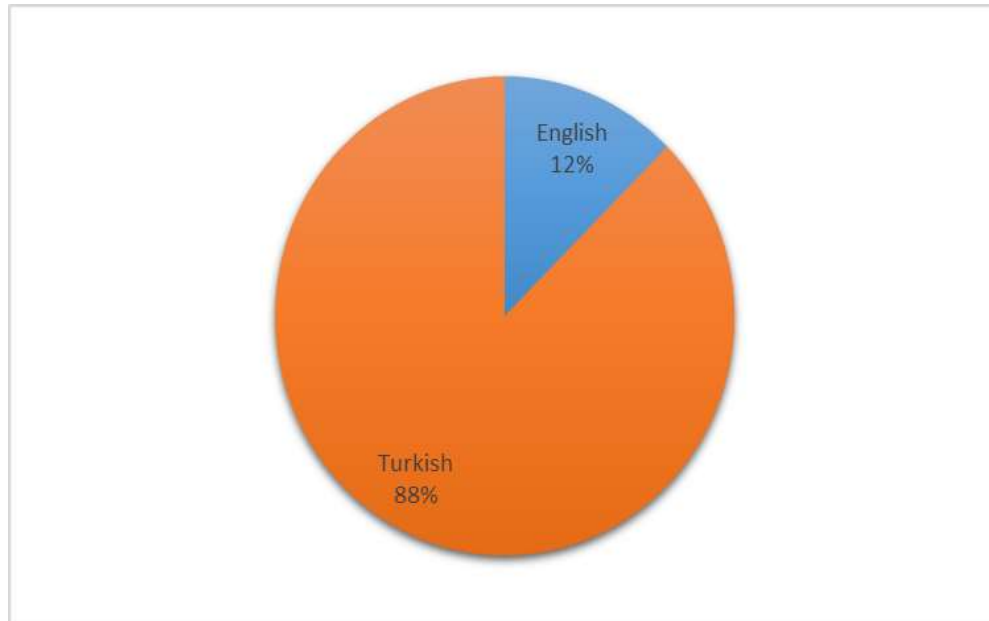


Figure 2. Distribution of Studies by Publication Language

When Figure 3 is examined, it is understood that 21% of the studies on curriculum fidelity were carried out with high school teachers, 17% with secondary school teachers, and 17% with primary school teachers. The rate of studies in which teachers working at different teaching levels were evaluated together is 29%.

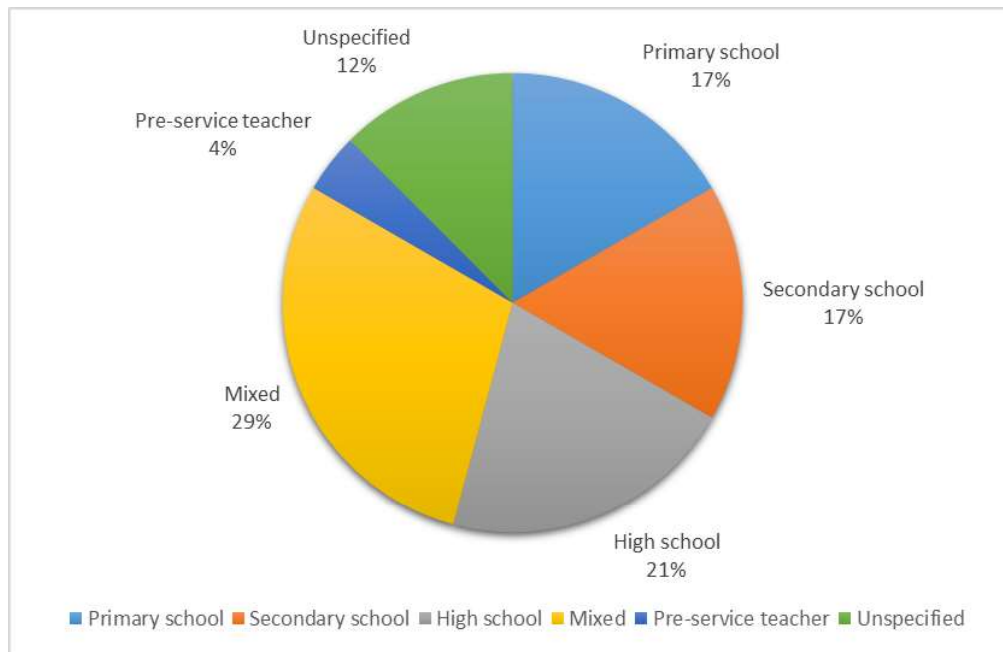


Figure 3. Distribution of Studies by Study Group

Examining Figure 4 reveals that 70.8% of studies on curriculum fidelity were articles, while 29.2% were theses. Most of the articles are of the original research type. A doctoral dissertation on the commitment to the curriculum is completed at the doctoral level.

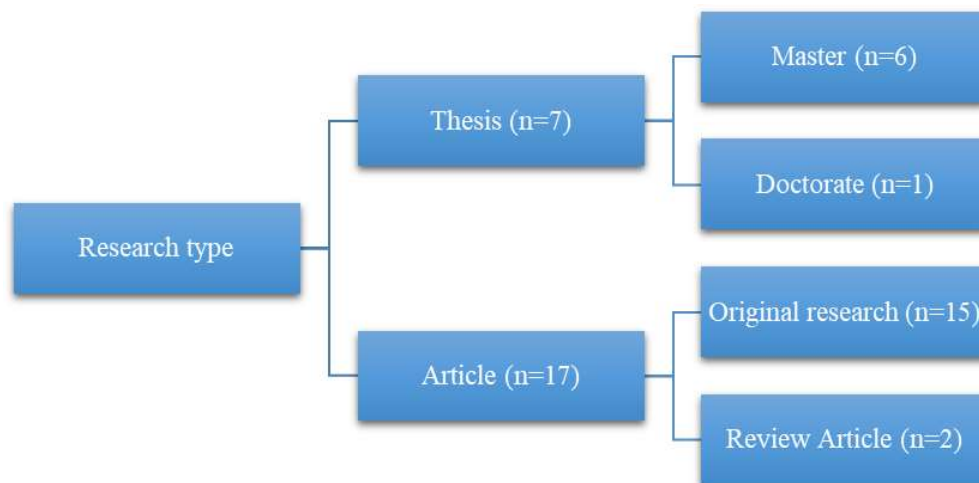


Figure 4. Distribution of Studies by Study Type

Examining Figure 5 reveals that studies on curriculum fidelity often consider commitment in conjunction with personal and professional factors. Other issues associated with curriculum commitment are curriculum literacy, self-efficacy, curriculum design approach, professional commitment, curriculum orientation, teacher autonomy, educational philosophy, teaching motivation, and learning-teaching process competence.

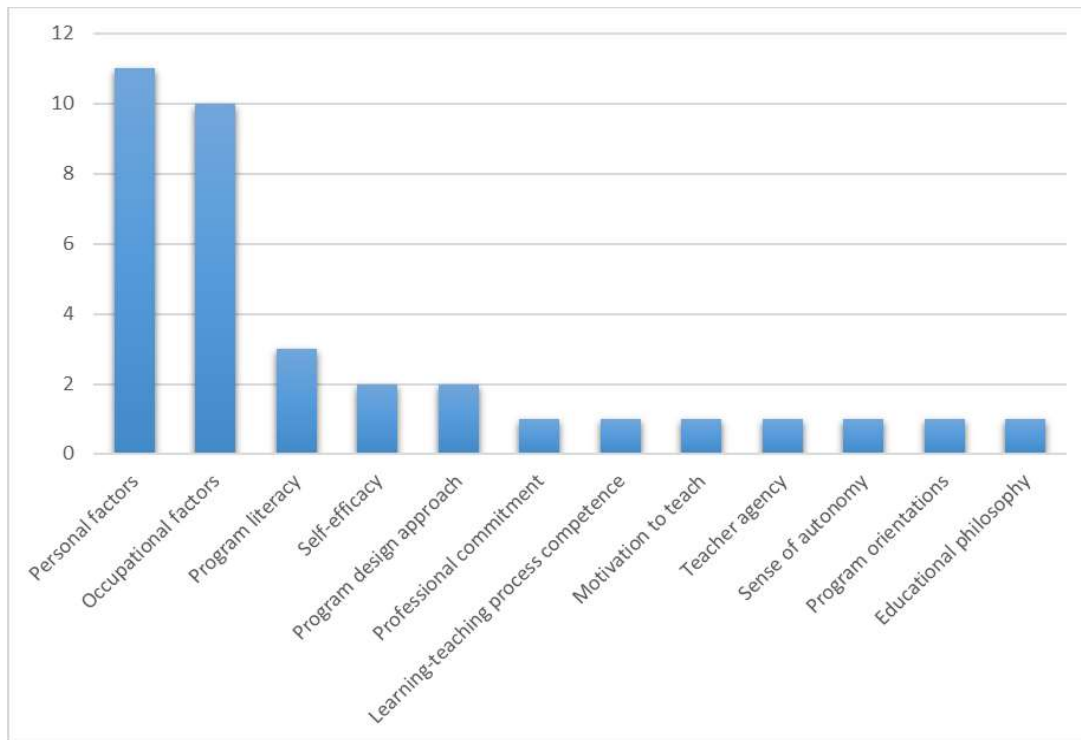


Figure 5. Distribution of Analytical Thinking Skills by Related Subjects

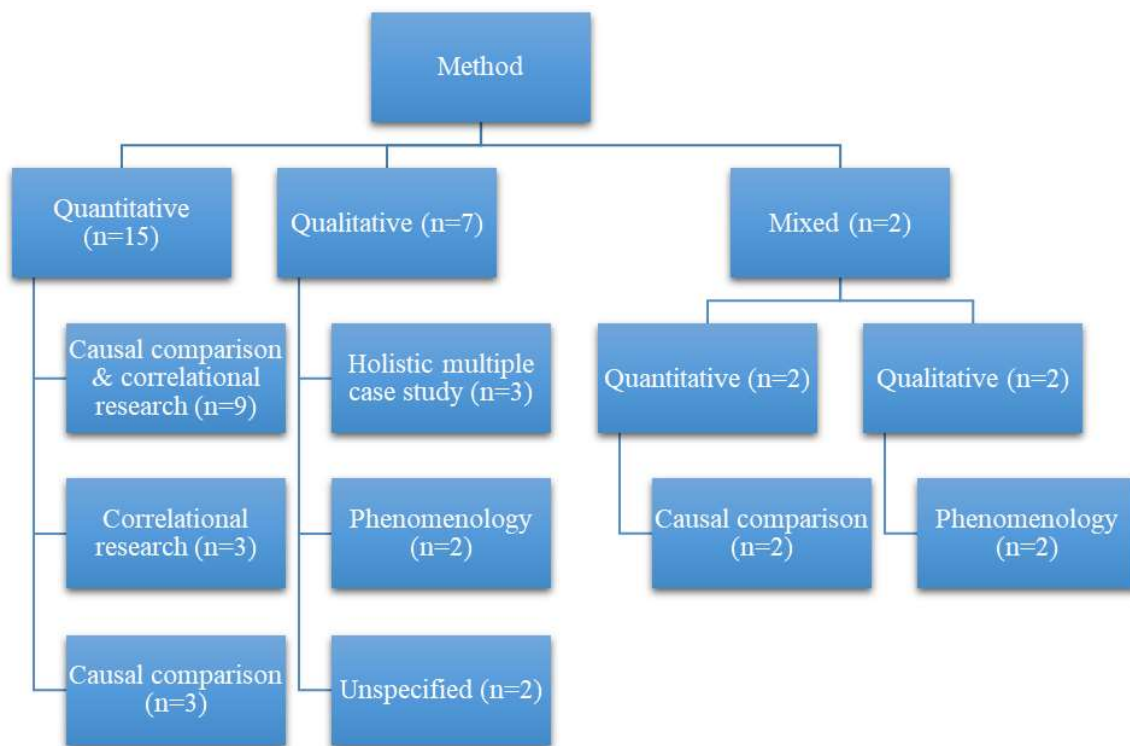


Figure 6. Distribution of Studies by Study Type

When Figure 6 is examined, it is observed that quantitative methods are used in most curriculum fidelity studies. Among the quantitative methods, it was determined that causal comparison and correlational research designs were used more often together. Approximately one-third of the studies were conducted with qualitative research methods. Many of these studies are in the Holistic multiple-case study type—studies in which qualitative and quantitative methods are limited in number.

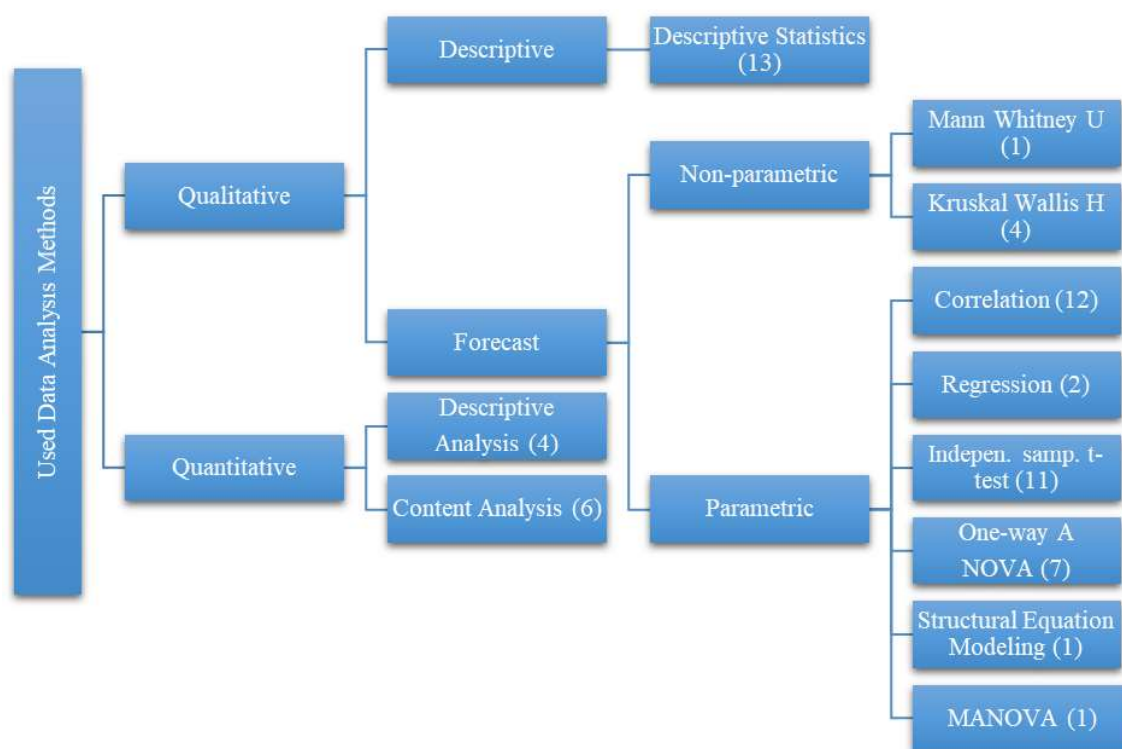


Figure 7. Distribution of Quantitative Analysis Techniques Used in Studies

When Figure 7 is examined, it is observed that descriptive and parametric analyzes are used more in quantitative studies on curriculum committees. Descriptive analyzes were used to determine the level of commitment to the curriculum. Correlation analysis, on the other hand, was used to identify the factors associated with curriculum fidelity. The number of studies using multivariate analyzes such as MANOVA and structural equation model analysis is limited. In qualitative studies, it was observed that descriptive and content analysis methods were used.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research presented a descriptive analysis of studies on teacher commitment to the curriculum in Turkey. According to the research results, research on teachers' commitment to the curriculum started in 2014 and has increased significantly in recent years. Most of these studies were published in Turkish. There are studies in which teachers working at different teaching levels, including high school, secondary school, and primary

school teachers, are evaluated together.

In addition, it was seen that most of the studies on curriculum fidelity were in the type of articles, and quantitative methods were used. It has been observed that curriculum fidelity is more often considered together with personal and professional factors. The study identified several factors associated with a solid commitment to the program, including understanding the curriculum, self-efficacy, curriculum design approach, professional dedication, curriculum orientation, teacher autonomy, educational philosophy, teaching motivation, and competence in the learning-teaching process. In order to better understand teachers' commitment to the curriculum, studies that aim to examine the relationships between variables such as school climate, leadership style, collective efficacy perception, academic optimism, and curriculum fidelity are needed.

Most of the studies used causal comparison and correlational research designs from quantitative designs. It has been observed that studies using quantitative methods mostly contain descriptive and parametric analyzes. Descriptive analyzes were used to determine the level of commitment to the curriculum. Correlation analysis, on the other hand, was preferred to determine the factors associated with curriculum fidelity. The number of studies using multivariate analysis is limited, and the number of studies using advanced analysis such as MANOVA and structural equation model analysis is limited. The number of qualitative and mixed-pattern studies is less. It is stated that direct observation is the most accurate due diligence approach since self-reported reports lead to inflated judgments about the level of performance (Vartuli & Rohs, 2009). In this direction, increasing the number of qualitative studies and diversifying the methods used can be recommended.

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